

Copy of letter.  
E. McK. Scott.

Mackay, July 2nd. 1914.

Mrs F. A. Gibson,

Dear Madam,

I have no doubt you would have thought me a very unfriendly person in not answering your kind letter, you must excuse me, I have only shortly returned to Mackay after touring Western Australia and New Zealand.

Thanks to your dear father and uncles, that I am in a position to take life easy in my old age. I got my start on Rannes and Banana. As you would like to hear something of your dear relatives, I will try to enlighten you as far as I can remember, it is a long time ago, my memory is not too good at the present time.

Any-way we arrived at unlucky Rannes from the Burnett in 1854; Mr. Norman and Mr. James Leith-Hay, along (with) Kelley and Marchel (Marshall?) and Mr. Sweet as manager. Also little Conners as we used to call him, as all the others was six feet and over. Your husband will (remember) Dan Conners in Mackay, that is little Conners, at the time he accompanied Hay Bros. Conners had 10,000 sheep of his own with two bullock drays and 20 horses. Mr. Hay allowed Conners to run his sheep on the Dawson River until such times as he could get out to Pinchester where he had a run taken up. Pinchester is betwixt Rockhampton and Marlborough about sixty miles north west from Rockhampton. The Archer Bros. came out from the Burnett to Gracemere on the Fitzroy in 1855. Elliot Brothers came out in '57 to Canoona Station on the North side of of the Fitzroy, little Conners left the Dawson and travelled with Elliot Bros.

Pinchester is about 30 miles from Canoona. I think Conners and myself was the only two left of the Rannes pioneers, Conners died last year.

Mr. Charles Leith-Hay arrived at Rannes in '55 from Scotland, also Mr. Gray. I think Mr. Gray was brother-in-law to Mrs James Leith-Hay.

The Hays deserved to get on, they worked hard and risked their lives. The natives were very numerous and very treacherous. At the shearing of '54 the natives killed twelve (two?) native police within two hundred yards of the Bark house that Mr. Norman and MR. James Leith-hay were sleeping in.

Mr. Norman left Rannes the latter part of '56 for Port Curtis, 150 miles, it is called Gladstone today, he was intending to go to Sydney in the schooner "Sea Belle", only schooners traded North in those days. After leaving Port Curtis neither the passengers or the vessel was ever seen again. The vessel was blown out of her course and wrecked on the rocks, where Emu Park is at the present time, north of Rockhampton. The crew and passengers all got ashore safely, the natives took them to a freshwater lagoon and early the next morning the natives murdered the men. There was a Mrs Harty and two daughters along with Sergeant Harty. It was more than twelve months before we heard a word of the fate of the "Sea Belle". I had left Rannes as there was nothing doing, on account of Mr. Norman not reaching Sydney.

I came to Rockhampton to build a house for the late Mr. Wiseman, he was Crown Land Commissioner. You must understand it was all N.S.W. then before Separation. I had two black boys barking timber for me, they told me they were going to "big corobberie" "along salt water". In about a fortnight they returned almost dead, cut almost tp pieces. Then they told us all about the wreck of the "Sea Belle", and the fate of the unfortunate passengers. They described "one fellow white fellow

cobra (head) good way cobone bogey along white mary, that fellow ketch two fellow young fellow along grass (hair) bring him along mudlo (shingles) then bogey along Mamey and ketch him along grass." Mr Norman was a fine swimmer.

Mrs J. Leith-Hay used to ride from Rannes to Limestone and back on horseback. Mrs J. Leith-Hay must have been as brave as she was good, as she came to Rannes in '56, and there was only small schooners on those days from Brisbane to Port Curtis and she travelled with bullock drays all the way to Rannes. Mrs J. Leith-Hay was with her; she had a young woman with her as servant, and she had a baby girl under twelve months old, how I know Mr. J. Leith-Hay gave all hands about the house a bottle of whiskey each in honor of her first birthday. I remember one person got tipsy, and went and asked for more. Mr. J. Leith-Hay said he did not give spirits for him to make a fool of himself, he was sorry he had given him a bottle.

I do not know if you are the first-born of Mrs Leith-Hay, I remember Mrs Leith-Hay rambling about looking for herbs to brew into medicine, she gave me a bottle after Separation.

After Separation Mr. & Mrs Leith-Hay came to live in Rockhampton (note by J.W.C.- Mrs Gibson was born in Rockhampton) They lived on the allotment next to mine. Mr. J. L.H. was Gold Warden, afterwards he was P. M. at Bowen. I built two cottages for Mrs J.L.Hay in Rockhampton. I never knew anything of them after they left Rockhampton.

Re the letter in the paper of E.M.S., I had no idea the man was a reporter, he came and sat down on the verandah, and commenced to talk about old times until he threw me out and said I should put my experiences in the paper and took out a book to take notes. He got no more out of me, he said he would put what I had told him from memory. I told him not to mention my name.

Hoping you will be able to read this scrawl, I must conclude,  
I remain, yours most respectfully,  
E. McK. Scott.

P.S. Only fancy, a railway station at Rannes, God help any one that attempts farming on Rannes. It is a regular ant bed, dry as a tinder box, broke everyone that had anything to do with it.

Rannes, Dawson Valley.

The settlement of the Dawson Valley dates back to the arrival of the Leith-Hay Bros with their staff and flock of sheep in April 1853, settling just below the junction of the two rivers the Don and Dee, on the west slope of the range, naming their place Rannes ~~after~~ and the streams after their home in Aberdeenshire, Scotland; but before dealing with this historical event it is of interest to look back to the early history of those brave pioneers.

James, Norman, and Charles were three of the five sons of Colonel Sir Alexander Leith-Hay of Rannes, Aberdeenshire, Scotland.

In the late thirties of the last century Ernest Dalrymple Elphinstone Dalrymple, who had recently returned from a trip to Ceylon, India and America, delivered ~~an~~ an address in Aberdeen of his travels, and spoke of Allan Cunningham's explorations in Australia, (leaving Brisbane 23rd. July, 1828. through the Logan Valley and Cunningham's Gap to the Darling Downs), and of the wonderful pastoral lands of the Darling Downs. He was so impressive that a party of young men of the best families of the district decided to make the trip to Australia. They included Ernest Dalrymple, Patrick and James Leslie, the first settlers of the Darling Downs, George and John Gammie, George McAdam, James Fletcher, James, Norman, and Charles Leith-Hay, who arrived in Australia in 1840.

E.E. Dalrymple was presented with two thoroughbred horses and ten head of Aberdeen Angus cattle by his uncle, and these, together with cattle for Leslie Bros for Canning Downs were the first pure-bred cattle to come on to the Darling Downs, arriving in July 1840, to Goombur, part of the original Canning Downs (the creek and township of Allora being part of the run). Unfortunately E.E. Dalrymple died in 1844, previously selling his holding to the Aberdeen Coy. His brother George. Elphinstone Dalrymple, was a member of the Queensland Parliament in 1866.

The Leith-Hays came to Canning Downs to the Leslies, James becoming overseer of Canning Downs. In the late forties the Leith-Hays in conjunction with Mr. Fairholm, purchased Toolburra and Yeelburra. These properties they resold to the Leslies in 1852.

The Leith-Hays then transferred their interest to the Wide Bay district purchasing Ger Gey and Maradum, but finding that they were unsuitable for sheep, decided to move inland, and in March, 1853 they travelled through Coonanbulla, near Eidsvold on the Burnett, then owned by the Archers, with 28,000 sheep, travelling into unknown and unexplored country till they settled and named the country Rannes, a distance of 130 miles north of Eidsvold, the nearest settlement at that time.

David and William Archer passed through Rannes on the 30th April 1853 on their trip to discover the Fitzroy River, and later settled at Gracemere in 1855, having in that year brought their flock of sheep over from Eidsvold.

It is interesting to record that the Archers in 1853 followed the Dee River to the head, and over the range practically where the Main Highway crosses. In 1855 they took their flock via Westwood way, which was better going for sheep.

The first shearing from Rannes took place in 1844. The wool went, bullock drays to Maryborough via Gayndah, a distance of over 220 miles. Later, in 1856 a shipment of wool was made from Port Curtis, now Gladstone, a distance by road of 110 miles. The track was up the Don River to the Calliope Range and followed the Calliope River to Stowe, which was settled in 1855, being then the nearest settlement to Rannes, over a most difficult and dangerous track. A second load of wool was made from Gladstone in 1856, and on the return journey Mrs James Leith-Hay travelled back to Rannes in the bullock dray with a baby daughter, accompanied by her husband and a young woman servant over this dangerous road with little escort, at a time when the blacks were most troublesome. Mrs Leith-Hay lived at Rannes for some years, being the most northerly ~~most~~ white woman in Australia, which distinction she enjoyed for a number of years.

A later shipment of wool was made from Gladstone in the schooner, Sea Bell, accompanied by Mr. Norman Leith-Hay, which unfortunately was wrecked on Keppel Island having been blown off her track. The crew and passengers got safely ashore but were all murdered by the blacks.

Mrs. James Leith-Hay was Maria Catherine, the youngest daughter of Colonel Charles George Gray, Police Magistrate at Ipswich. His son, Robert John Gray, was some time Commissioner for Queensland Railways. Mrs Leith-Hay died in Ipswich in June 1876.

James Leith-Hay was born at Aberdeenshire, Scotland, in September 1824, and died at St. Servien in April, 1887, on a visit to France.

His son, C.E.W. Leith-Hay, went to Scotland in 1881, and succeeded to Leith Hall, Rannes in the Don Valley. His only son, Charles was tragically killed in September 1939 at the age of 21 after joining up for war service.

The Hays were also the owners of Banana, so their run probably extended as far south as Banana. In 1859 they sold Rannes and Banana to Towns and Stewart who in 1864 sold again to Thomas Andrew and John Brown Watt. In 1866 the property was transferred to J.W. Watt and in 1884 he took into partnership Michael Wickham Cunningham. They in turn sold to Andrew Harper Stirrat in 1904 who held the property till 1913, when he sold to the present owner J. L. Wilson.

During shearing in 1854 the wild blacks killed a number of Native Police within 200 yards of the Rannes Homestead.

In 1855 there was a C.P.S. Court at Rannes.

J.L. Wilson.

Note  
incorrect  
date for  
CEN  
Leith Hay  
to Scotland  

---

Not 1881